

Massimo Sturiale

**CONVERTED TO GOD: BERNARDINO OCHINO'S SERMONS**

**TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY ANNE COOKE.**

ABSTRACT. Anne Cooke Bacon's literary fame rests on her translation of the *Prediche* written by Bernadino Ochino, the Italian Protestant reformer. She was highly praised by her English and continental contemporaries as the books dedicated to her clearly demonstrate. Her first anonymous publication of Ochino's *Prediche* dates back to 1548. Notwithstanding her young age, she was twenty years old at the time, Anne Cooke evidently felt ready to face such a difficult task as that of translating one of the most popular reformers of the time. Indeed, «she was actively involved in the religious controversy of the day, and her translations position her as a strong advocate for the Protestant cause» (Wayne 2000: ix). All in all, Anne Cooke puts her translations in a *via media*. Opting for a compromise, at times she displays subordination to the source text and its original author whilst on other occasions, in the attempt to domesticate Ochino's sermons, she has inevitably been tempted to recreate a work which satisfies her readers' expectations and the stylistic devices of her time.

## 1. Italian contribution to the Protestant Reformation in England

One of the core elements of this paper is the Italian contribution to the Protestant Reformation in England. The title page of Michael Wyatt's *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England. A Cultural Politics of Translation* (2005) provides a brief summary of the aim of his work as follows:

In the wake of the English Reformation, Italian Protestants joined other continental religious refugees in finding Tudor England to be a hospitable and productive haven, and they brought with them a cultural perspective informed by the ascendancy among European elites of their vernacular language (Wyatt 2005).

In a few words, Wyatt manages to inform his readers of the fact that there was an active Protestant Italian community at the time and it can be inferred that Italian Protestants made an important contribution to the cause. The Italian community was influential in many aspects, and its cultural and religious effect was both direct, i.e. works published in England, and also indirect due, to use Norman Blake's terminology, to «the flood of English translations» (Blake 1992: 4) of Italian books on any subject. Something which recalls, to quote Wyatt's title page once again, «The Cultural Politics of Translation» (Wyatt 2005. See also Higman 1993).

A huge contribution to the spread of anti-Catholic ideas was made by Italian heretics, many of whom, after leaving their homeland, put both their creative vein and their cultural background at the disposal of the Protestant cause. During the

Lutheran revolution, philosophical treatises, satirical dialogues, pasquinades and plays became the main weapons with which to fight the Church of Rome, its institutions and dogmas. While philosophers, addressing a cultured audience, chose Latin for their works, others, wanting to involve the lower strata of society, chose the vernacular (cf. Firpo 1993: 9) and Bernardino Ochino was one of them.

## 2. Bernardino Ochino

Born in Siena in 1478 in the contrada dell'Oca, hence the nickname Ochino, Bernardino Tommasini took his vows at the age of twenty-seven at the Franciscan monastery of the Osservanza and then, after twenty years, entered the Capuchin order. Deeply influenced by the evangelical ideas of the Spanish exile Juan de Valdés, the Capuchin General gradually distanced himself from the Church of Rome. Throughout those years, Ochino managed to gain a reputation as an excellent preacher and, thanks to his contacts with Valdés, he maintained friendly relations with the most 'renewed' women of the Italian Renaissance, Giulia Gonzaga and Vittoria Colonna, to whom he had become a spiritual guide, as well as with illustrious figures such as Bembo. Following an order to appear before the Inquisition tribunal, issued by Cardinal Carafa, Ochino decided to leave Italy and find refuge in Geneva. Thus began his long pilgrimage that would take him from Basel to Strasbourg, from

Augsburg to London and then back to Geneva and before finally dying in Poland at the age of seventy-six in complete poverty and solitude.

Here I will only dwell on Ochino's stay in England (1547-1553) which, among other things, represented the golden period of his life, both as a preacher and as an author (see Mc Nair 1991). The former Capuchin went to London, on the explicit invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in December 1547 in the company of another great exponent, Pier Martire Vermigli. When the Catholic queen [Mary I](#) ascended to the English throne in 1553, Ochino returned to [Europe](#), first to Switzerland and then to Poland where he died in 1564.

## 2.1. Bernardino Ochino's sermons

Ochino's *Prediche*, which represent his most important literary production, were written over a period of twenty years (1542-1562) and are divided into five parts. The first volume of the *Sermons* was published in Geneva in October 1542, immediately after his escape from the country, as the result of an order to appear before the tribunal of the Inquisition. The volume, entitled *Prediche di Bernardino Ochino da Siena. Si me persecuti sunt, et vos persequentur sed, Omnia vincit Veritas*, opens with a dedication to his readers, which would later also be published at the beginning

of the 1562 edition<sup>1</sup>. In the dedicatory letter he declares that when faced with the choice between denying the truth of the Gospel, remaining under the employment of Rome, or dying remaining faithful to the word of Christ, he deliberately chose to flee as both Christ and Paul did in order not to betray the divine will. However, Ochino promised those who had followed him back home that he would continue to preach the true word of Christ and, unable to go into the pulpits of Italy, he would spread his thoughts through the press. Over the course of twenty years, the Sermons were translated into several languages: in addition to the two French translations, there were also two German translations, which, when added to the English translations and the various sermons that appeared individually in Latin, reveal the spread of Ochino's ideas throughout much of Europe.

The thread running through the sermons is justification by faith, and to support his thesis, Ochino continually uses quotations from the Holy Scriptures and St Paul. Indeed, faith becomes the only way to enjoy Christ's message. In addition to challenging confession, Ochino tackles a theme that, among others, had attracted Princess Elizabeth so much, namely that of predestination and consequently that of individual freedom and election.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1562 a collection of all the five parts of Ochino's *Prediche* was published in Basel. A copy of this book is held by the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma and it is the text used for the present study.

### 3. Anne Cooke Bacon

Anne Cooke was the second daughter of Ann Fitzwilliam and Sir Anthony Cooke. Her qualities as a scholarly, pious woman were already exalted by her contemporaries (cf. Whiting 1922 and Hogrefe 1977). Lady Anne Cooke Bacon's literary fame rests on her English translations of Ochino's *Prediche* from Italian and Bishop John Jewel's *Apologia ecclesiae anglicanae* from Latin as well as her intense correspondence with her two sons Anthony and Francis Bacon where she deplored «plays and masques, defending the rights of Non-conformists, and [gave] affectionate but vigorous advice to her distinguished sons» (Sage 1999: 31).

That Anne Cooke was deeply appreciated and admired by her contemporaries is demonstrated by the numerous books which were dedicated to her in the time span between 1564 and 1596. For example, Thomas Drant's dedicatory epistle published in his *A Medicinable Moral* (1566) or those by Theodore Beza, Thomas Wilcox or Andrew Willet in his *Sacrorum emblemantum centuria una* (1596).

#### 3. 1 Anne Cooke Bacon: An Elizabethan translator

Her first anonymous publication of Ochino's *Prediche* dates back to 1548. Notwithstanding her young age, she was twenty years old at the time, Anne Cooke

evidently felt ready to face such a difficult task as that of translating one of the most popular reformers of the time. The title page *Sermons of Barnardine Ochine of Sena Godlye, frutefull, and very necessarye for all true Christians translated out of Italian into Englishe. Anno Do. M.D.XLVIII Menis Iulio* (STC 18764) does not mention either the name of the translator or the printer who was probably a certain Richard Carr. Anne Cooke's decision to translate Ochino's *Prediche* and later to have them published should be read in the context of the religious controversy.

### 3.1.1 Paratext

The epistle to the reader («The Interpretour to the gentle reader, healthe in Christe Iesu»), together with the translation itself, can be interpreted as a contribution to the religious debate. Apart from being a kind of prelude to the main themes discussed in the sermons, the epistle offers some personal thoughts on the part of the translator which contribute to producing an indirect but effective reasoning on the role of translation in the emergent Protestant culture.

What is worth pointing out is the fact that an analysis of the prefatorial material will enable us to perceive, unlike similar material written by others and not the author, the voice of a woman who, speaking directly to her readers is mainly playing the role of translator and at the same time of author/creator («In consideration whereof I have translated in to my natyue speech out of Italiē [...] maister Bernardine

Ochin»), setting her apart, at least momentarily, from the label of daughter, wife and exemplary mother.

In collocating her translation within the theoretical frame of the theological debate of her time and in choosing the key themes of Calvinist ideology (justification, salvation and predestination), Anne Cooke tries to avoid any strong criticism either of herself or of her translation which had as its main aim «the enformacion of all that desire to know the truth» (Cooke 1548: sig. A4r). In the typical style of the time, making use of the «modesty topos» (Stewart 2000: 91), the prefatorial material thus presents the translator's apologies which read as follows:

so it is thy curtyse (gentle reder) to accept them in good parte, & *pardon my grosse tearmes as of a beginner*, and beare wyth my transaltion, as of a learner obteynynge thys of the good reader I shalbe redye and wyllynge here after when god geveth better knowledge (according as my talēt wyll extende) to turne mō godly sermōs of the sayd mayster Bernardine into Englishe for the enformacion of all that desire to know the truth. (Cooke 1548: sig. A4r. My italics)

Cooke apologises at the same time for being an inexperienced translator and for her poor knowledge of the Italian tongue. However, she reveals her desire to carry on with another translation once she has deepened her theological studies and strengthened her mastery of Italian.



### 3.2 More sermons

In what is widely believed to be 1551, another volume (STC 18766), containing newly translated sermons, came out. It included twenty-five sermons. The first six sermons were those translated by Richard Argentine and also published in 1548 (STC 18765) – some time before Cooke’s first volume – and the remaining nineteen sermons were translated by Anne Cooke: sermons 7-11 from the 1548 edition and 12-25 were new translations. Around the same year, in 1551, another volume appeared, this time with the title *Fouretene Sermons of Barnardine Ochyne, concerning the predestinacion and eleccion of god: very expediente to the settinge forth of hys glorye among hys creatures. Transalted out of Italian in to oure native tounge by A. C.* Unlike the 1548 edition, this publication not only includes the initials of the translator on the title page but also features a letter «To the Christen Reader» by a certain G. B. and a dedicatory letter «To the right worshipful and worthily beloued Mother, the Lady F.» – signed as “Your Ladyshippes Daughter most boundenly obedient A.C.”. Allen suggests that it is plausible that «Anne’s authorship was stressed in the second 1551 edition to highlight support for Ochino within influential circles at the Edwardian court, including William Cecil, which pushed for further religious reform» (Allen 2013: 59).

In his epistle, in praise of Anne’s translation, G.B. writes:

The “Godly Apostolyke doctryne should not be private to those onely which understande the Italian tounge, synce thorow the honest travel of a wel occupied Ientlwoman, and verteouse meyden they speake in Englishe” (Cooke 1551ca: sig. A3r)

and later:

If oughte be erred in the translacion, remēber it is a womās yea, a Ientyl womās, who cōmenly are wonted to lyve Idelly, a maidens y<sup>t</sup> neuer gaddid farder thē hir fathers house to learne the language. (Cooke 1551ca: sig. A3r)

Much quoted, especially by feminist critics, the letter has helped shed light on the role of mothers as supervisors of the education of their daughters and has been interpreted as a defence of women’s translation (see, among others, Goodrich 2018, Hannay 1985, Hosington 2011 and Lamb).

Thanks to a robust and elegantly articulated discourse, Anne Cooke builds her defence as a woman translator mainly emphasising her spiritual vocation and the Protestant cause:

[...] youre Ladysypes mere carefull, and Motherly goodness, as well in procurynge all thynges thereunto belongeynge, as in youre many, and most Godly exhotacyons, wherein amonge the rest it hath pleased you *oftē, to reprove my vaine studye in the Italian tonge*, [...] I have at the last, perceiued it my my duty to proue howe muche the understandynge of youre wyll, could worcke in me towards the accomplyshynge of the same. [...] it may please, youre Ladyshippe to uouchsafe that thys my small labor may be allowed at

your hādes under whose proteccion only it is committed wyth humble reuerence, as yeldyng some parte of the fruite of *your Motherly admonicions*, *in thes my wyllinge seruyce*. (Cooke 1551ca: sig. A4r. My italics)

Anne Cooke presents herself to her readers as a very determined woman, confident in carrying her project notwithstanding any negative reproach coming from her mother which is made evident in the words «reproue my vaine studye in the Italyan tonge». The letter ends with «your Ladyshyppes Daughter most boundenly obedient», as if the author sought shelter from possible accusations of ‘transgressing’ the basic rules any woman was expected to respect.

With this second volume, Cooke kept her promise, expressed in the Preface of the 1548 publication, to translate other sermons by Ochino and at the same time showed she had reached maturity and mastery both in religious matters and in Italian. The importance of having Ochino’s *Prediche* translated into English is once again used as legitimization of her deed so it is not perceived as disobedience, but a useful means to reveal the truth and «exaltinge wholly the glory of God». In fact, Anne Cooke, addressing her mother, writes: «I haue taken in hande [...] this smale number of Sermons for the excelēt fruit sake in thē contained, proceding from the happy spirit of the sanctified Barnardyne» (Cooke 1551 ca.: sig. A3r).

#### 4. Translating Ochino

As has already been shown, Anne Cooke began her career as a translator by rendering into English a selection of Ochino's *Prediche* (contained in the volume published in Geneva in 1542) which were anonymously printed in London in 1548. The source text contained fifty sermons but only five were translated into English. In order they were: the twenty-first «Del testamento che deba fare il Christiano» («How a Christyan oughte to make hys last wyll and testamente»), the ninth «Come doveremo respondere al demonio quando ci tenta, et particolarmente, nell'ultimo della vita nostra» («How we suld answer the deuell, when he tempteth us and namely in the ende of our lyfe»), the tenth «Come si debba respondere al tribunal di Dio» («How answer is to be made at the iudgement seate of god»), the forty-first «Del modo per salire al cielo» («By what meane to come to heauen») and lastly the eleventh «Come Christo ha satisfatto per li peccati nostri, et ci ha acquistato il paradiso» («How god hath satisfyed for our synnes and hath purchasyd Paradyce for us»).

It is clear from the choices made by Anne Cooke that she was mostly attracted to the themes related to salvation and predestination which were key concepts in the emerging Calvinistic ideology.

A similar preference is shown in Cooke's selection of the fourteen sermons taken from the second part of Ochino's *Prediche* (1548-1549), which constitute the bulk of

the 1551 edition. Unlike other Elizabethan translators (see Hermans 1985: 106), Cooke does not refer to any methodological issues in her prefatorial materials. Her interests lie more in the content rather than in form and she tries to attract the readers' attention immediately to the themes the book deals with.

Starting from the dedicatory letter, Cooke shows her ability as a scrupulous and gifted writer who cares for that stylistic “plainness” that Thomas Wilson some years later – in his *The Arte of Rhetorique* published in 1553 – would recommend and defend. Thus giving her personal contribution, as Archbishop Parker acknowledged in his Preface, to the «good fame and estimation of your own natiue tongue». However, an in-depth analysis of her translations reveals that the syntax and lexis are sometimes influenced by that of the Italian source texts to the extent that they sound unnatural. Nevertheless, the translation is sometimes richer in meaning and in interpretation thanks to the abundant use of doublings which, as Adamson puts it, «had become the hallmark of aureate style» (Adamson 1999: 557). The following example, taken from the first sermon «How a Christyan oughte to make hys last wyll and testamente», shows the way in which Cooke's version has the tendency to be amplified:

Sonno soliti gl'huomini nelli  
loro *testamenti* dire, *lasso*,  
*lasso*, *lasso*, senza dir mai  
*porto*, & errano, perche  
portano quello, che

It is commonly the custome of  
men in theyre *testamentes*, and  
*last willes* to say *I leave*, *I*  
*bequeath*, *I geue*, wythoute onse  
saynge *I take or carye wyth me*,

douerebbero lassare, & sene vanno senza portare, quello che gl'è molto *necessario*, però acciò piu non errino, *voglio che vediamo* come il Christiano douerebbe testare. (Ochino 1562: sig, N4v. My italics)

wherein certes they be farre deceyued, bycause they take that, whyche they ought to leaue behynde them, and go wythoute caryinge that whych is uerye *behofefull and necessarye*. Wherefore to the entent they shuld no more erre on that behalfe: *I wolde we shulde cōsyder and weyghe* how a true Christiā shuld make hys wyll. (Cooke 1548: sig. A1. My italics)

Cooke adds to the *reduplication* a ternary structured synonymic sequence («I leaue, I bequeath, I geue») and moreover uses four doublings recalling redundant *amplification*: «testamentes, and last willes» for «testamenti»; «I take or carye wyth me» for «porto»; «behofefull and necessarye» for «necessario» and «cōsyder and weyghe» for «vediamo».

However, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Sturiale 2003), Cooke managed to further manipulate or subvert the original text, thus making her authorial voice audible, in her application of modal verbs and modal expressions. It is here impossible to show and discuss all the numerous examples found and collected in my corpus - these being more than eighty - but the following one will be offered for the purposes of the analysis:

E ben vero questo, che s'io havessi robba, *la lassarei* ai poueri di Christo, non per che

Truth it is that yf I haue any goodes thē *must* I leave to the poore flocke of Christ, not

pregassero per me, gia saluo,  
ma per gl'altri che sonno in  
vita, & che nasciaranno, si  
come fece Christo (Ochino  
1562: sig, M3r. My italics)

bicause they shuld praye for me,  
that already saued, but for the use  
of other that lyve, shalbe borne,  
as Christ dyd (Cooke 1548: sig.  
B3r. My italics)

So, what in Ochino is a declaration of intent expressed by «lasserei» in Cooke is a clear example of deontic modality. Once again the translator manipulates her source text adding her personal opinion and interpretation but being, at least exteriorly, faithful.

Let us consider the following example taken from the second sermon:

Et se gli dicesse, Per salvarti  
non basta credere in Christo,  
*bisogna* osservare i suoi  
precetti, *bisogna* che ami Dio  
con tutt'il core (Ochino 1562:  
sig, C3r. My italics)

And if haplye he shuld say, it is  
not sufficient for thy saluacion to  
beleue in Christe, the [sic]  
*behoueth* to kepe hys  
commaundements, thou *must*  
loue god wyth all thy harte.  
(Cooke 1548: sig. B3v. My  
italics)

The first occurrence of «bisogna» is rendered as *behove*. In the *OED*, entry 4a under BEHOVE gives the following indication:

(quasi-*impers.* - the subject being a clause). In early Middle English without *it*, which is now ordinarily used. a.) with the thing incumbent expressed by an infinitive, and with personal object: It is incumbent upon or necessary for (a person) *to do* (something)»

and for sense 5: «To be under obligation (*to do*); = must needs, ought, have».

Keeping this in mind, one can infer that Cooke opts for a verb which, semantically, embraces necessity and «weak obligation» (Coates 1983: 18). Instead, the idea of «strong obligation» is reinforced by the presence of *must* in «thou *must* loue god wyth all thy harte».

As a further example of hyper-translation and text manipulation we can consider the following

Di poi, si come Christo fu posto in su la croce, della quale non volse descendere, se bene con scherni gli fu ditto che se era figliolo di Dio, descendesse della croce & gli crederebbero, imo, per che figliolo di Dion, però non volse descendere, ma perseruerare, & cō la propria morte, far perfetta la salute nostra. Così anco il Chrisriano, *si trasforma* in

Moreouer as Christe was done on the crosse, frō whence, he wold not come done, although in scorne it was sayed to hym, that yf he were the son of god, he shuld come doune of y<sup>e</sup> crosse, & they wolde beleue hym: but bycause he was the son of god, he wolde not come doune, but abyde there, & with his oune death make perfecte our saluacion. In like maner also a Christen mā *must be transformed and changed*



Christo crocifisso, tal che con Paulo dice, Io son crocifisso con Christo. & in modo tale allui vnito in su la croce, che nissuna cosa potrebbe mai separarmi dalla charità di Dio, che è in Christo Giesu (Ochino 1562: sig. X2r. My italics)

in to Chryste crucyfied, so that wyth Paule he may say I am crucyfied wyth Chryst, in such wise also knit to him o nthe crosse, that nothyng ys hable to parte me frome he loue of god, whycg is in Christe Iesus (Cooke 1548: sig. E2v. My italics)

Here Ochino, as in other parts of his *Prediche*, uses Paul's words by quoting his letter to the Romans, to illustrate the correct behaviour of a good Christian. Indeed, this short extract could be read and interpreted as being somehow autobiographical if one thinks about the difficulty the Italian preacher himself had to face and the high price he had to pay for his conversion.

The verb phrase in the passive voice «must be transformed and changed» using the interpretative key suggested by Coates could be read as «it is necessary for a Christian to be transformed and changed» where, once again, deontic modality is clearly made explicit.

When dealing with translation, one must take into account the limits presented by such a text where the expression of modality is, or may be, influenced by the original work. For this analysis I have mainly focused on the rendering of the Italian verb *dovere* used to express deontic modality which in English can be expressed by *must*, *should*, *have to* or *ought to* marking in turn various shades of meaning. Surprisingly enough *ought to* was the verb preferred by Anne Cooke when rendering deontic

modality expressed by the Italian *dovere*. However, Ochino uses also verbal expressions such as *è necessario, è forza, bisogna, avere a, essere da*. In these cases Anne Cooke uses auxiliaries or semi-auxiliary modal verbs which will not be discussed here. In most of the examples from the two translations (sixty-two out of sixty-four), the marginal modal *ought to* appeared with its full construction to +infinitive.

All in all, on the level of translation, Cooke seems to follow, in both her versions of Ochino's *Prediche*, the tendency of the period, also for clear ideological purposes, and in doing so always remains faithful to the original in form and content. In general she has in mind Cicero's and Horace's model of the *fidus interpres*, even though in certain circumstances she seems to be influenced also by Quintilian, who claimed that *imitatio* was not always possible since even in nature there are not two things that are completely identical (cf. Hermans 1985: 107).

## 5. Concluding remarks

What can be inferred is that Anne Cooke puts her translations in a *via media*, opting for a compromise, at times she displays subordination to the source text and its original author whilst on other occasions, in the attempt to domesticate Ochino's sermons, she has inevitably been tempted to recreate a work which satisfies her readers' expectations and the stylistic devices of her time. It is in the process of re-creation and re-writing, as has been pointed out, that translation becomes a means to

subvert and transgress the strict social and intellectual conventions imposed on women. An example of such a convention can be exemplified through the idea that when applied to the act of translating the rule of silence, obedience and chastity aimed at mere *imitatio*, with the subsequent annihilation of the translator for whom, thus, translation was a literary exercise for the benefit of the community. Anne Cooke's subversive act, on the other hand, consisted of giving her translation that vigour so dear to the Elizabethans. As Demers puts it:

The Ochino project was an instructive apprenticeship for Anne Cooke. As well as securing the recognition of ever-canny publishers, she must have experienced the pleasure of extending the audience of this charismatic preacher, the satisfaction of displaying her linguistic skills, and the freedom to emphasize elements of moral obligation in her own text (Demers 2016:12).

To sum up, Anne Cooke did not just 'dub' Ochino's voice, but sometimes, in giving a personal interpretation to the message of the sermons, she made her own voice

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